

Sermon Mark S. Aites  
**THE IMPORTANCE OF GODLY ELDERS**

**TEXT: TITUS 1:5-9**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. Titus was a Gentile (**Gal. 2:3**); but to Paul, he was *a partner and fellow-worker*, and son *after the common faith* (**2 Cor. 8:23**; **Titus 1:4**).
2. Titus labored in various places in serving the Lord; having spent time with Paul in Ephesus, and even in making that journey to Corinth to see the effects of Paul's first letter to that troubled congregation.
3. In the letter which bears his name he was serving the Lord in Crete, an island in the Mediterranean Sea. It is 158 miles long, and varies in width in places from 5 to 50 miles.
4. Paul addresses three particular topics in this letter: church organization, holy living, and discipline.
5. It is the matter of church organization that we want to look at in this lesson.
6. **Titus. 1:5-9** *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:*  
**1:6** *If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*  
**1:7** *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*  
**1:8** *But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;*  
**1:9** *Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

**DISCUSSION:**

**I. THE NECESSITY OF LEADERSHIP (TITUS 1:5).**

- A. We notice that the admonition of Paul was to address the things which *were wanting*. From the book, we can determine that this embraced several things.
  1. At the head of the list was of course the need for competent and godly leadership (**1:5**).
  2. There was also the realization that false teachers were going unchallenged (**1:10-16**).
  3. Various members of the church were not assuming their responsibilities:
    - 1) He addresses the older men (**2:1-2**).
    - 2) Older women (**2:3-4**).
    - 3) Younger women (**2:4-5**).
    - 4) Younger men (**2:6**).
  4. There was also the general challenge to the church to live a godly life (**2:11-15**).
  5. He even addresses the need for the members of the church to be law abiding citizens (**3:1**).
  6. And also follows up with concerns about those who were causing trouble (**3:9-11**).
- B. Titus is told to *ordain* or *appoint* elders.
  1. Vines states of the word: that *appoint* means, "to appoint a person to a position."
  2. What is important in regard to such an appointment, is that the individuals to be appointed must meet certain requirements given of God.
  3. Scripture is inspired of God (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**); therefore what is penned here is from the Holy Spirit, and is not to be taken lightly.

4. It is important that we clearly understand: men are not qualified because they are appointed, but appointed because they are qualified!
- C. We also note that the inspired admonition was that elders were to be appointed in every city, bolstered by Paul's making it clear that this was an apostolic command.
  1. **Acts 14:23** *And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*
  2. The phrases, every church, and, every city, makes it abundantly evident that elders are to preside in every congregation of the Lord's church.

## II. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A GODLY LEADERSHIP.

- A. **6** *If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*
  1. It is a shame that I need to say this, but the qualifications clearly apply to men aspiring to be elders, and not women.
  2. It is disheartening to know that in some places in some congregations that women in leadership roles is becoming a common place thing.
  3. Let's make it crystal clear; that to take such action is not with the approval of God.
- B. The idea of being *blameless* refers to being without accusation, irreproachable.
  1. It in fact is similar to **1 Tim. 3:7** which stresses the importance of being of good reputation.
  2. By blameless, is does not mean sinless; if it did, no one would be qualified to be an elder, since *we all come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23)*.
  3. Each of us is subject to stumbling, even men who would aspire to be elders.
  4. But it does address the need that the man who would be an elder not have uncorrected wrongs which can be leveled against him.
  5. It is reasonable to say that his character and standing should be good both within the church, and in the local community.
- C. Paul then brings in what might be termed as family qualifications.
  1. Why is that so important? Paul answers that in **1 Tim. 3:5** (*For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*)
  2. With that importance in mind, he is to be *the husband of one wife*; that is, he must be a married man, and the husband of only one wife.
  3. He also must have children who are faithful; not referring to faithfulness to the elder, but faithfulness to God; faithful as Christians.
  4. Not only must these children be faithful, but they also must be void of something.
    - 1) For one thing, they must not be *accused of riot or dissipation*.
    - 2) In the parable of the prodigal son, it speaks of how the younger son wasted his inheritance in prodigal or riotous living (**Luke 15:13**).
    - 3) In **Titus 1:6** it embraces the idea of one being reckless; difficult to control, or out of control.
    - 4) *Unruly* carries the idea of not being in subjection to authority.
    - 5) The NKJV refers to it as insubordination.
  5. It all goes back again to the concern, that if a man cannot control his own household, then how can we entrust him with the care of the Lord's church!
- D. The qualifications now shift to the characteristics necessary for a man to be an elder.
  1. **Titus 1:7** *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled,*

- not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.*
2. Notice that the word *blameless* again appears as the apostle stresses the concept twice in the same text.
  3. It is not listed that a man *should be blameless*, but that he must be blameless.
- E. Then notice an often overlooked comment, that as an elder he is a steward of God.
1. We understand stewardship in that, as Christians, we are responsible for what has been entrusted to us.
  2. An elder, as a steward of God, is responsible not only for what has been entrusted as a Christian, but also with the responsibility of the care of the souls of the church (**Acts 20:28**).
- F. The qualifications concerning characteristics are presented then in a negative form:
1. *Not self-willed*, from a term which lit. means “self-pleased.”
  2. It embraces the idea that one is consumed by self-interest.
  3. **3 John 9** *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.*
- G. Another negative, is that an elder must not be *soon angry or quick-tempered*.
1. **Prov. 14:17** *A quick-tempered man acts foolishly...*
  2. L.R. Wilson: “A man who is quick to fly off the handle and make rash statements will make many enemies for himself and the church.”
- H. An elder is not to be given to wine.
1. Greek: “One who sits long at his wine, drunken, quarrelsome over wine, hence, brawling, abusive.”
  2. To be given to wine is to lack self-discipline and self-control.
  3. Wine contributes to one being quarrelsome, certainly among other problems that come with the consumption of alcohol.
- I. An elder also is not to be violent.
1. The Greek lit. refers to a person who is a “bruiser, ready to blow, contentious, quarrelsome.”
  2. This refers to one who is of such a character that he is always ready to fight or engage in strife.
- J. In the last of these negatives, he informs us, an elder must not be greedy for money.
1. One of such a covetous spirit is one who desires wealth.
  2. It would be very harmful to the church to install a man as an elder who is given to abuse the Lord’s money.
  3. Robert Taylor, Jr.: “A man who wishes to hoard and build up the church treasury for the sake of vast sums of idle money in the bank could not begin to qualify for the eldership.”
- K. As the qualifications proceed, in **vs 8** we note that they are set in contrast to the negatives in **vs 7**.
1. **Titus 1:8** *But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.*
- L. *Hospitality*, from a Greek word lit. meaning “generous to guests.”
1. J.Noel Meridith: “Given to hospitality means one who finds pleasure in sharing his home and food with others and does so. It is one who is friendly and generous in the entertainment of guests.”
  2. It is not just hospitality in the matter of providing meals or lodging, but in the

general demeanor of dealing with others.

M. *A lover of what is good.*

1. Rex Turner: "He must be a lover of good men, not an admirer of, nor a participant with evil men."
2. The original Greek word lit. has the idea of loving that which is good.
3. His heart and mind must be attuned to that which is good, and also must stand in opposition to that which is evil.
4. An elders needs to love good and godly men; he needs to love the truth; and most certainly love the Lord.

N. *Soberminded; temperate.*

1. Along with that is the emphasis in **1 Tim. 3** that he must have self-control or be vigilant.
2. An elder must possess self-discipline; he needs to have control of himself, as we noted in the case of not being given to wine.
3. If a man cannot control his tongue and actions, how can he control Christ's church?
4. The words carry with it the idea of seriousness, as a man not given to extremes.
5. And in the matter of self-control, Thayer's Lexicon indicates that a self-controlled man is one who lives right with himself. He possesses powers in "mastering, controlling, curbing, restraining, controlling one's self, temperate, continent."

O. *Just and holy.*

1. There is a purity and holiness to this office.
2. As those who would oversee the church of God (**Acts 20:28**), they must be exemplary in character.
3. Guy N. Woods: "The word 'holy' derives from the same root form as the words 'holiness' and 'sanctification'. A holy person is one dedicated to God"
4. L.R. Wilson: "An elder must deal fairly, honestly, and in an upright manner with all people. He cannot be selfish, clannish or biased in his thinking, or in his dealings."

P. And to round out the list in Titus, is **vs 9**:  *Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

1. Clarence DeLoach: "The elder as a minister of God must hold it as the *pattern* and *practice* of his life."
2. **1 Tim. 4:16** *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*
3. An elder must, with His knowledge of the doctrine of God, be able to exhort and convict those who contradict; in the KJV, the *gainsayers*.
4. He must be able to comfort with the word, and he must be able to rebuke those who would hurt or bring harm to the church.

Q. These are the qualifications given in the book of Titus; it is important though, that one study also **1 Timothy 3:1-7** to note others given as well.

1. He must be apt or able to teach and also not be a novice.
2. These are serious matters set forth, that those who would be elders, meet the qualifications set forth.

### III. THE WORK OF ELDERS.

- A. Another term for an elder is *bishop*, a term which means an *overseer*.
  - 1. The responsibility embraces being sure the church is doing what it exists to do.
  - 2. **Acts 20:28** *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*
  - 3. As overseers, the responsibility entails being sure that the church is fed properly; that is, that it is taught the truth.
  - 4. And not only fed, but to give the church an example in how a Christian should live.
  - 5. **1 Pet 5:2-3** *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*
- B. Not only are they overseers, but as we noted, are charged as *stewards*.
  - 1. To reiterate, a steward is one who has something placed in his trust.
  - 2. Elders are entrusted with the souls of God's people.
  - 3. **Heb. 13:17** *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*
- C. And in their work, we must also respect the admonition again of **Titus 1:9**, that these men must have the ability to exhort or encourage, but also to deal with the disorderly.
- D. Make no mistake about it, the responsibility that an elder has is an enormous one; and should not be entered into lightly, but soberly and reverently.
  - 1. We know that teachers, based on **James 3:1**, will receive a *heavier* or *stricter judgment*.
  - 2. Can we think any less of elders?

### IV. INSTALLATION OF NEW ELDERS. (Borrowed)

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ members of this congregation have been put forth to serve as elders in this congregation: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. **STATEMENT TO THE MEN BEING APPOINTED:** Brethren, the church has indicated great respect for you, and confidence in you, in choosing you to serve as their elders. You have heard the qualifications and duties of this office. The work and growth of this church may be affected by how you discharge the duties being placed upon you. Do you, therefore, accept this appointment with humility, and with the sincere intentions to serve God and this church as faithful elders from this day forward; if so, I ask that you men stand to show your acceptance of this responsibility.
- C. Brethren, these men stand before us for appointment as elders of this congregation. It has been your duty to determine whether these men are Scripturally qualified to serve in this position. It is the will of God that qualified men be chosen from each congregation to serve in this capacity. These men have been suggested by you for appointment. A reasonable procedure has been followed to determine their suitability for this work. Your acceptance of these men should be without reservation, just as they must, without reservation, accept the duties to be placed upon them.
- D. Based on the information which has been brought to your attention and in light of Scriptural requirements, can you now recommend that \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, be appointed to serve as elders in this church? If so please respond, "I do."

- E. Will you, therefore, from this day forward recognize \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, as Scripturally appointed elders of the Swartz Creek Church of Christ? If so, please respond, "I do."
- F. Will you join with me in prayer: Almighty God in Heaven above, With humbleness of hearts do we come into your Divine presence, not of our own authority, but that of your beloved Son, Jesus. We are grateful for every blessing which you so greatly shower upon us, especially that of your Son, and the precious church for which He shed His own blood. We are grateful for that which you have provided in Your Holy Word that would tell us of the leadership in the church which is pleasing in Your sight. We are grateful for those letters written from Your apostle Paul, and to the men Timothy and Titus, as well as the admonition of the apostle Peter, that we might understand the qualifications of men who would aspire to be elders. In Your presence this day, \_\_\_\_\_ men were selected from among the church which meets at this place to accept the office and responsibility of the eldership. We are grateful for each of these men, and the willingness that they have expressed to serve this congregation in that capacity. We seek Your blessing as I install the eldership. We pray that you would be with these men, and that in their efforts to uphold that which is true and right, that you would richly bless them. We pray for the future of this church, and that you would help us to be what You want us to be, and that you will help us as we reach out to the world around us, that souls might be saved. In this process this hour, we pray that You may be glorified, as we do all these things to the glory of Your Son, in whom we are privileged to be members of His church. In Jesus' Holy and Divine Name do we pray. Amen.
- G. Now, therefore, in view of the congregation's approval, and of their acceptance, and our prayer for the acceptance of God's blessing, be it known from this day, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ that, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, are duly appointed elders of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church of Christ.
- I. May I be the first to offer you my congratulations, and also in honesty, my condolences.
1. I am happy for you and for the church that we have leadership, but in my time in preaching for the Lord's church, I know that just as there are many joys for elders in serving the Lord, there are also many days of difficulty and heartache ahead.
  2. I pray that God will bless each of you through the good days, and most certainly, through the rough times to come.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

1. In our study of Titus we have learned of the importance of having godly leadership in the church.
2. The admonition in this that we need to apply to our own lives, is that we must be sure that what we do is in accordance with what God has written in His Holy Word.
3. We must not live to please self, but Him who is the Creator and Sustainer of our very lives.
4. We have studied those matters this morning which benefit the Lord's church; but we also must be mindful of that which can benefit our own lives.
5. Your soul is important, and you must be sure that you do all that God requires of you, if you seek to be pleasing in His sight.
6. **Mt.16:26** *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*